

***Also Includes GI Bill Increase, Housing Assistance for Disabled Veterans***

**Washington, DC-** Today House Veteran's Affairs Committee member Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) announced of a package of three bills that would further allow Americans to keep promises to our veterans. The Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) Act of 2008 would increase the rates of disability and survivor benefits for our nation's veterans. Additionally, Rodriguez introduced bills that would increase the amount of education assistance for veterans, HR 5663, and that would help with construction or renovation of housing for disabled veterans, HR 5664.

“Our economy is struggling and as our disabled veterans face what seems like constantly rising prices for gas, food and other everyday items, it is important that we pass a cost of living adjustment that helps with everyday needs,” said Rodriguez. “This aid package is about keeping our promises to our veterans. These bills will help our veterans by providing better compensation for disabled veterans and survivor families, by expanding opportunities for veterans to earn a college education, and by ensuring better housing options for disabled vets.”

The COLA is necessary for thousands of disabled veterans and survivor families, many of who depend on disability and survivor benefits as their only source of income. The adjustment is tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which is to be determined after the third quarter of the year. The CPI has averaged a 4.39% annual increase from 1975-2007. Last year's increase was 2.3%. U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) has sponsored a matching measure in the Senate. The bill is expected to pass quickly and be signed in to law by the President.

Rodriguez's bill to increase education would increase the amount of basic education assistance for those whose period of active duty is three years to \$1,450 per month and increase the amount of basic education assistance for individuals whose period of active duty is two years to \$1,250 per month. Both amounts would be paid for up to thirty-six months.

Finally, HR 5664 is a bill to correct an oversight in the way the VA advises contractors constructing or renovating housing for disabled veterans. The bill would ensure that disabled veterans whose homes are updated or built benefit from all possible modern technology and construction practices.

“Our veterans have served their country so we must show our appreciation by giving

them the best possible resources for when they return to civilian life," continued Rodriguez. "These bills continue our tradition of providing resources to our veterans."

Rodriguez will testify at a hearing today, April 16, 2008 on behalf of HR 5663 and HR 5664 at a hearing in the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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*Congressman* **Ciro D. Rodriguez** is a former social worker who currently serves on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the powerful House Committee on Appropriations. For more information on Congressman Rodriguez please visit <http://rodriguez.house.gov/> or contact his Communications Director Josh Rosenblum at [joshua.rosenblum@mail.house.gov](mailto:joshua.rosenblum@mail.house.gov)